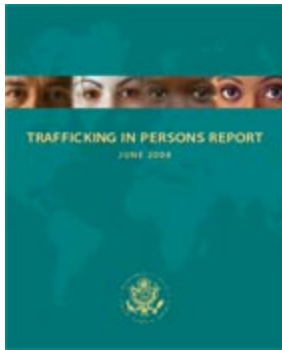


## TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS REPORT 2008



"We are pleased that in the seven years since the creation of the Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, the United States and our friends and allies have made important strides in confronting the reality that human beings continue to be bought and sold in the twenty-first century. It has been gratifying to witness the determined governments, human rights and women's groups, faith-based organizations, and many brave individuals who are dedicated to advancing human dignity worldwide. Trafficking and exploitation plague all nations, and no country, even ours, is immune."

--Secretary Rice, June 4, 2008

### GUINEA-BISSAU

Guinea-Bissau is a source country for children trafficked primarily for forced begging and forced agricultural labor. The majority of victims are boys who are religious students, called talibe, who are trafficked by religious instructors, called marabouts, to other West African countries, primarily Senegal. The eastern cities of Bafata and Gabu are key source areas for talibe, and the most frequented route to Senegal is overland via the porous border, especially near the town of Pirada. Deceived into believing their children will receive a religious education, parents often agree to send their child away with marabouts. However, instead the instructors force the children to beg daily for up to 12 hours in urban centers and physically abuse them if they fail to collect a certain quota of money. All trafficking through and from Guinea-Bissau is overland, reportedly by foot, taxi, bus, or animal-driven carts.

The Government of Guinea-Bissau does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so, despite limited resources. Guinea-Bissau is placed on Tier 2 Watch List for its failure to provide evidence of increasing efforts to combat severe forms of trafficking in persons from the previous year, as evidenced by its continued failure to pass an anti-trafficking law and to prosecute and convict traffickers under related laws. The government continued to protect trafficking victims and to contribute an annual \$16,000 donation to the anti-trafficking NGO, AMIC. For the second year in a row, however, Guinea-Bissau demonstrated inadequate efforts to investigate or prosecute trafficking crimes or convict and punish trafficking offenders.

**Recommendations for Guinea-Bissau:** Draft and pass a law prohibiting all forms of trafficking in persons; increase efforts to prosecute traffickers under forced labor and trafficking-related laws; form an inter-ministerial committee on trafficking to coordinate national anti-trafficking efforts; and develop a national action plan to combat trafficking.

### Prosecution

The Government of Guinea-Bissau demonstrated weak anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts during the last year. Bissau-Guinean law does not prohibit all forms of trafficking. However, forced labor is criminalized. Police do not actively investigate trafficking cases, in part because they lack basic investigatory tools, such as vehicles and electricity. Police detain suspected traffickers they encounter and arrange for the transport of suspects to the police headquarters in Gabu. However, police usually release traffickers rather than charging and prosecuting them. In November 2007, officials took seven suspected traffickers into custody in the northern city of

Bafata for allegedly attempting to traffic 17 children by bus from Guinea-Bissau to Senegal for forced labor. Officials failed, however, to provide follow-up information about whether the suspects, six of whom were from Guinea-Bissau and one of whom was Senegalese, were prosecuted or convicted. Also in November 2007, officials detained another group of suspects in Bafata attempting to traffic 52 Bissau-Guinean children between the ages of six and 11. One suspect was apprehended, but later released, while the others escaped. The government failed to report any trafficking prosecutions or convictions. In the last year, the government implemented a new requirement, based on existing child protection laws, that parents who collude with traffickers be jailed. Under this requirement, parents must sign a contract that holds them criminally responsible if their trafficked children have been re-trafficked after having been rescued and returned to parents. The Police, courts, and AMIC work together to explain and enforce this contract requirement. The regional court, in particular, has assumed the responsibility of explaining to parents the exact nature of their legal responsibility for their children. In the last year, one father was jailed for 72 hours after his child had been re-trafficked to Senegal. Authorities released him after he agreed to go to Senegal to bring his child home. A police inspector within the Ministry of Interior has official responsibility for coordinating the nation's anti-trafficking enforcement response and cooperation with UNICEF, but these efforts are poorly organized.

### **Protection**

The Government of Guinea-Bissau continued solid efforts to provide care for trafficking victims during the year. While the government does not operate victim shelters, it contributed some funding to AMIC, which operates the country's only trafficking shelter, located in Gabu. AMIC may provide victims with assistance for up to one month before returning them to their parents. Police in Gabu and Bafata continued to refer victims to AMIC and assist in locating victims' families. The Bissau-Guinean Embassy in Senegal continued to be a leader in providing care to trafficking victims by helping NGOs in Senegal identify and repatriate victims. The embassy used its operating budget to assist trafficking victims and was later reimbursed by its Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The government cooperated with NGOs and international organizations to repatriate 62 children from Senegal in the first half of 2007. In November 2007, police intercepted 69 victims at the border with Senegal. The government does not encourage victims, all of whom are children, to assist in trafficking investigations and prosecutions. Victims are not penalized for unlawful acts as a direct result of being trafficked.

### **Prevention**

The Government of Guinea-Bissau made significant efforts to raise awareness about trafficking during the reporting period. The Minister of Interior traveled to key trafficking victim source areas to speak publicly to police about zero tolerance for child trafficking. Guinea-Bissau's Ambassador to Senegal contributed to regular anti-trafficking radio broadcasts in Gabu to alert parents in Muslim communities to the dangers of sending their children away for Koranic studies. To prevent parents from sending children away, local government officials also worked with NGOs and villagers to teach the Koran locally. One community developed a religious education program after the regular school day. Village elders reported that children from nearby villages attended this evening program instead of traveling long distances, such as going to Senegal, to learn the Koran. However, Guinea-Bissau lacks any high-level coordinated initiative to combat trafficking. Guinea-Bissau has not ratified the 2000 UN TIP Protocol.